

Heading into the New Year

I would like to start this letter with a short update on the Military and Physical Programs, and then talk about my priorities for this academic year.

DMI continues to integrate the latest OIF/OEF lessons learned and the new Army leadership development and training initiatives into military training and military science education. We also have integrated Army Basic Officer Leadership Course (BOLC) Pre-commissioning Tasks with these lessons learned to create a sequential and progressive program to better prepare our cadets for the Army they will enter. Consistent with these efforts, we have also just briefed the Superintendent on Cadet Summer Training 2006, and he approved the following proposals:

- Continue the weapons immersion environment, where cadets keep their personal weapons with them 24/7.
- Issue each cadet individual body armor to wear throughout the summer.
- Shift Camp Buckner to a "Forward Operating Base" scenario and introduce squad lanes.
- Refine our focus on fundamental individual and small-unit skills.

This training is an integral part of the BOLC curriculum and mirrors those operations conducted by our Soldiers today in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Department of Physical Education (DPE) recently administered the fall Army Physical Fitness Test to the Corps. Although the scores were generally consistent with past years, we continue to notice one disturbing trend. Cadet performance peaks during Second Class year and then drops slightly in First Class year. To address this trend, I have directed the Master of the Sword to provide recommendations at the end of this academic year for a curriculum that will provide for sustained and continuous improvement in cadets' physical fitness over the 47-month West Point Experience.

In my command guidance for this academic year I noted our accomplishments in the past year, which were significant and meaningful, and used them to build my priorities for this year. Of note, USCC:

- Educated, trained and inspired the Corps of Cadets and graduated an excellent USMA Class of 2005.

- Improved our assessment procedures and systems.

- Refined the Military Science curriculum and improved Cadet Summer Training.

- Developed and launched the new Professional Military Ethic Education program.

- Opened Arvin Cadet Physical Development Center and continued to produce excellence in the Physical Program during the transition to the new facility.

- Improved the system and all the resources available to prevent sexual assault, care for victims, and take appropriate action with perpetrators.

- Improved both the business process and the product in the Directorate of Cadet Activities.

Based on these accomplishments, my priorities for this year are to:

- Teach and reinforce in the cadets the importance of discipline, attention to detail, and precision in the fundamentals of our profession.

- Ensure the First Class recognize their responsibilities and accountability as leaders of the Corps and willingly enforce high standards and embrace the values of our profession.

- Incorporate GWOT experiences, tactics, techniques, and procedures into all relevant cadet training and education to develop adaptive, competent, and confident leaders.

- Develop methodologies and practices to routinely and effectively assess our programs, activities, and requirements to ensure we are meeting our established goals and allocating our resources appropriately.

My main priority for the Corps of Cadets is to continue to emphasize and reinforce discipline, attention to detail, and accountability as the cadets execute their responsibilities in the Corps. Every part of USMA has a stake in this aspect of cadet development, from the Dean's instructors in the classroom to the corps squad coaches at practice. While we continue to stress this facet of their development, I believe that this is also one area in which we will never be satisfied that we have "made it."

I am very impressed with the Class of '06 leadership thus far. They have stepped forward and embraced their responsibilities to the Corps and are committed to leading the Corps and developing their subordinates. They have been in close contact with recent graduates currently serving in Iraq and Afghanistan, and they clearly understand the environment in which they will be serving and are committed to being as prepared as possible.

Within the Military Program, we continue to refine our events and requirements to ensure they contribute to cadets' leader development and

are relevant to the Army they will enter. I have written in past letters about some of our changes to Cadet Summer Training, but we have also expanded our training opportunities in the academic year. We have re-arranged the weekend allocation of time so we simultaneously give cadets more unscheduled weekends over the course of the year but also block one Saturday per year per cadet regiment for an eight-hour day of concentrated military training. The tasks in each block are tasks our Soldiers are performing in Iraq and Afghanistan every day and are planned, coordinated and conducted by the cadet leadership, with assistance from the tactical chain of command. See my next letter for a more-detailed discussion of these training Saturdays.

My main priority for the staff this year is to begin to unify, systematize and strengthen our assessment of the Military and Physical Programs and the Moral-Ethical domain. While I am convinced that we have been producing the caliber of officer expected of the Military Academy, our successes have largely been based on the consistent application of thoughtful expert judgment rather than the result of systemic, objective assessments of our activities and their effectiveness. The Superintendent recently approved the establishment in FY08 of a five-person strategic planning and program assessment cell in the USCC headquarters, to be headed by a civilian vice commandant. This cell will be chartered to develop and execute a program-level assessment and strategic planning strategy that complements existing capabilities within the different USCC directorates. Additionally, this will provide improved continuity in strategic planning and assessment to the Commandant and USCC, which experiences more frequent leader rotation than other USMA major activities.

The modifications and updates to the elements of the Military and Physical Programs are expected and needed, as we continue to keep pace with the Army's needs and to incorporate its lessons learned, but our goal remains the same—to graduate leaders of character for a career of service in the Army.

GO ARMY!

